

INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT Recent Developments within the Austrian People's Party (OeVP)

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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

Maneuvering for Influence within the OeVP

1. Although a current of dissatisfaction with Leopold Figl as Federal Chancellor continues within the OeVP, there is no prospect of his removal before the spring of 1950. A new party convention is scheduled to be held at that time, and it is believed possible that the offices of Bundesparteiobmann and Bundeskanzler, both now held by Figl, may be separated. Figl might retain one of these positions, or he may be appointed Landeshaupmann of Lower Austria. The feeling of the OeVP leadership is that Figl's removal immediately after the elections would have a bad psychological effect. The question of a new term for Figl after the elections was not even discussed at the meeting of the Landesleitung, Wien on 30 August 1949.*
2. Within OeVP ranks, Karl Gruber and Dr. Heinrich Gleissner, Landeshaupmann for Upper Austria, seem to be equally favored as the possible successor to Figl. Hurdes is not being considered at all as a candidate. Although he is a capable and respected man, his time is so taken up with the performance of official duties that he has no opportunity to build up political support; he spends little time in Vienna and does not have much contact with fellow party members. Of all the OeVP leaders, Graf is clearly making the most effort to succeed Figl. He is allegedly attempting to have Figl promoted to the sinecure of Federal President and is maneuvering to improve his own position with the OeVP by any means.**
3. Reports that Rudolf Kristofics-Binder, OeVP Member of Parliament, will be expelled from the OeVP are absolutely unfounded. On the contrary, he is strongly supported by Raab, and the Bundesleitung is making a vigorous effort to have Kristofics-Binder compete for an easy victory on a carefully selected election ticket for Lower Austria, since he was not selected for re-election from any Vienna district. Kristofics-Binder's election is important to the OeVP, since he is the only Nationalrat in the party with working class support.*** The Bundesleitung is also attempting to ensure the election in Lower Austria of Karl Friedl and Dr. Nadine Paunovic.

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The OeVP and Former Nazis

4. The opinion now of the OeVP Bundesleitung and of the group around Graf is that the wooing of the Nazis by the party was a mistake. Fritz Zink recently stated that the Junge Front and its newspaper, which is costing 40,000 schillings per issue, are both failures and will be dissolved after the elections. Zink said that he was opposed to the present policy of the OeVP which permits the formation of separate organizations corresponding to various shades of opinion within the party. In connection with the Junge Front, it is reported that the group has been waging a losing battle in its district meetings against representatives of the VDU (League of Independents) who have been successfully recruiting potential Junge Front members for their own organization. A rumor is circulating in the OeVP that Dr. Herbert Kraus, leader of the EDU, has received 3,000,000 schillings from the United States as a contribution to his election campaign fund.

The Monarchist Group within the OeVP

5. A Monarchist element which has been active within the OeVP has recently been formed into a subordinate section called "Referat für Oesterreichische Geschichte und Volkstum," or, more popularly, "Traditionsreferat." The leader of the group is Friedrich Ritter von Wiesner, a former state attorney and Austrian Foreign Service officer. Between the last two wars, he was a liaison agent between Archduke Otto of Hapsburg and high-ranking Austrian government officials. It is considered likely that Wiesner is in contact with Kraus of the VDU. The idea for the formation of this section originated with Felix Hurdus and Dr. Alfred Kasamas; its most active organizer has been Fran Professor Hittel. The OeVP has encouraged the "Traditionsreferat" which is considered a safety valve for Monarchist tendencies within the party and also a counter-balance against the Nazis.
6. The nucleus of the new Monarchist section in the OeVP has been formed by merging two already existing organizations. One, the Oesterreichische Gemainschaft, has 500 members. The leaders of this group are Kaerner in Graz, Wilhelm Schmidt in Salzburg, and Dr. Hittel and Dr. Sauer in Vienna. Sauer is the president of the organization and a pianist of some reputation. The organization publishes a magazine called Die Nation. The second organization is called Heimatland and is mainly a hiking society. Its president is Erich Tanner of Linz, but the real leader is Maria Lang of Vienna, who acts as secretary. A Col. Baumauer of Vienna is an active member.
7. Meetings of the section so far have indicated an interest in a sentimental reconstruction of Monarchist Austria, rather than any positive program for the future, and the section carries no weight politically. At a meeting held recently, Graf's representative in the section, Fritz Polcar, made an eloquent speech, which was well received, in favor of the old days in Vienna under the Hapsburgs. When a more constructive program was suggested by Dr. Alfred Heggan of the Oesterreichischer Verlag, however, it received no support from the members of the section.

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* [redacted] that at the meeting of OeVP Vienna headquarters on 30 August 1949, it was unanimously decided to oppose a new term for Figl after the elections.

25X1A ** [redacted] Comment: This account of candidates for Figl's position does not agree with a report from another source which gives the Party's first choice as Gruber, second choice, Hurdus, and third choice, Gleisner. Graf's name is omitted entirely from the list.

25X1A *** [redacted] Comment: The report of Kristofics-Binder's expulsion from the OeVP, although supported in the press, is in direct conflict with an account from another source which emphatically reports that Kristofics-Binder has been dropped from the OeVP. The same source goes on to say that an attempt to retain his seat in Parliament by offering a 100,000 schilling bribe to the OeVP was unsuccessful. At all events, however, Kristofics-Binder's name does not appear on the newly published electoral lists for Lower Austria. The OeVP is reported to have dropped Kristofics-Binder in order to avoid an awkward situation, since it had been learned that the Socialists intended to single out Kristofics-Binder for violent attack during the election campaign. He was allegedly responsible for arranging a meeting in 1946 between Raab and Figl on one side and Ernst Fischer on the other.